

## HOW DO WE KNOW?

It was a splendid room. Rich curtains swept down to the floor in graceful folds, half excluding the light, and shedding it in soft hues over the fine old paintings on the walls, and over the broad mirrors that reflect all that taste can accomplish by the hand of wealth. Books, the rarest and most costly, were around, in every form of gorgeous binding and gilding, and among them, glittering in ornament, lay a magnificent Bible--a Bible too beautiful in its appointments, too showy, too ornamental, ever to have been meant to be read--a Bible which every visitor should take up and exclaim, "What a beautiful edition! what superb bindings!" and then lay it down again.

And the master of the house was lounging on a sofa, looking over a late review--for he was a man of leisure, taste, and reading--but, then, as to reading the Bible!--that forms, we suppose, no part of the pretensions of a man of letters. The Bible--certainly he considered it a very respectable book--a fine specimen of ancient literature--an admirable book of moral precepts; but, then, as to its divine origin, he had not exactly made up his mind: some parts appeared strange and inconsistent to his reason--others were revolting to his taste: true, he had never studied it very attentively, yet such was his general impression about it; but, on the whole, he thought it well enough to keep an elegant copy of it on his drawing room table.

So much for one picture. Now for another.

Come with us into this little dark alley, and up a flight of ruinous stairs. It is a bitter night, and the wind and snow might drive through the crevices of the poor room, were it not that careful hands have stopped them with paper or cloth. But for all this carefulness, the room is bitter cold--cold even with those few decaying brands on the hearth, which that sorrowful woman is trying to kindle with her breath. Do you see that pale, little, thin girl, with large, bright eyes, who is crouching so near her mother?--hark!--how she coughs! Now listen.

"Mary, my dear child," says the mother, "do keep that shawl close about you; you are cold, I know," and the woman shivers as she speaks.

"No, mother, not very," replies the child, again relapsing into that hollow, ominous cough. "I wish you wouldn't make me always wear your shawl when it is cold, mother."

"Dear child, you need it most. How you cough to-night!" replies the mother; "it really don't seem right for me to send you up that long, cold street; now your shoes have grown so poor, too; I must go myself after this."

"O mother, you must stay with the baby--what if he should have one of those dreadful fits while you are gone! No, I can go very well; I have got used to the cold now."

"But, mother, I'm cold," says a little voice from the scanty bed in the corner; "mayn't I get up and come to the fire?"

"Dear child, it would not warm you; it is very cold here, and I can't make any more fire to-night."

"Why can't you, mother? There are four whole sticks of wood in the box; do put one on, and let's get warm once."

"No, my dear little Henry," says the mother, soothingly, "that is all the wood mother has, and I haven't any money to get more."

And now wakens the sick baby in the cradle, and mother and daughter are both for some time busy in attempting to supply its little wants, and lulling it again to sleep.

And now look you well at that mother. Six months ago she had a husband, whose earnings procured for her both the necessaries and comforts of life; her children were clothed, fed, and schooled, without thoughts of hers. But husband-less, friendless, and alone in the heart of a great, busy city, with feeble health, and only the precarious resource of her needle, she has gone down from comfort to extreme poverty. Look at her now, as she is to-night. She knows full well that the pale, bright-eyed girl, whose hollow cough constantly rings in her ears, is far from well. She knows that cold, and hunger, and exposure of every kind, are daily

and surely wearing away her life. And yet what can she do? Poor soul! how many times has she calculated all her little resources, to see if she could pay a doctor and get medicine for Mary--yet all in vain. She knows that timely medicine, ease, fresh air, and warmth might save her; but she knows that all these things are out of the question for her. She feels, too, as a mother would feel, when she sees her once rosy, happy little boy becoming pale, and anxious, and fretful; and even when he teases her most, she only stops her work a moment, and strokes his little thin cheeks, and thinks what a laughing, happy little fellow he once was, till she has not a heart to reprove him. And all this day she has toiled with a sick and fretful baby in her lap, and her little shivering, hungry boy at her side, whom Mary's patient artifices cannot always keep quiet; she has toiled over the last piece of work which she can procure from the shop, for the man has told her that after this he can furnish no more; and the little money that is to come from this is already portioned out in her own mind, and after that she has no human prospect of support.

But yet that woman's face is patient, quiet, firm. Nay, you may even see in her suffering eye something like peace. And whence comes it? I will tell you.

There is a Bible in that room, as well as in the rich man's apartment. Not splendidly bound, to be sure, but faithfully read--a plain, homely, much-worn book.

Hearken now while she says to her children, "Listen to me, dear children, and I will read you something out of this book. 'Let not your heart be troubled; in my Father's house are many mansions.' So you see, my children, we shall not always live in this little, cold, dark room. Jesus Christ has promised to take us to a better home."

"Shall we be warm there all day?" says the little boy, earnestly; "and shall we have enough to eat?"

"Yes, dear child," says the mother; "listen to what the Bible says: 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'"

"I am glad of that," said little Mary, "for, mother, I never can bear to see you cry."

"But, mother," says little Henry, "won't God send us something to eat to-morrow?"

"See," says the mother, "what the Bible says: 'Seek ye not what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink, neither be of anxious mind. For your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.'"

"But, mother," says little Mary, "if God is our Father, and loves us, what does he let us be so poor for?"

"Nay," says the mother, "our dear Lord Jesus Christ was as poor as we are, and God certainly loved him."

"Was he, mother?"

"Yes, children; you remember how he said, 'The Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' And it tells us more than once that Jesus was hungry when there was none to give him food."

"O mother, what should we do without the Bible?" says Mary.

Now, if the rich man, who had not yet made up his mind what to think of the Bible, should visit this poor woman, and ask her on what she grounded her belief of its truth, what could she answer? Could she give the arguments from miracles and prophecy? Could she account for all the changes which might have taken place in it through translators and copyists, and prove that we have a genuine and uncorrupted version? Not she! But how, then, does she know that it is true? How, say you? How does she know that she has warm life blood in her heart? How does she know that there is such a thing as air and sunshine? She does not believe these things--she knows them; and in like manner, with a deep heart consciousness, she is certain that the words of her Bible are truth and life. Is it by reasoning that the frightened child, bewildered in the dark, knows its mother's voice? No! Nor is it only by reasoning that the forlorn and distressed human heart knows the voice of its

Savior, and is still.